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**DUCK SOUP
PRODUCTIONS**

A JOURNAL FOR TOMMORROWLAND



*“Your reality,
sir, is
lies and balderdash,
and I am
delighted
to say that I have
no grasp of it at all!”*

Baron Von Munchausen
(Charles McKeowan & Terry Gilliam)

t r u t h

f i c t i o n

f r o m t h e e d i t o r s

by
richard nostbakken

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f i l m f l a m

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from the editor

Somewhat by design, and somewhat by laziness, this is a short issue — and from now on, nearly every issue is likely to be short.

We recently asked ourselves, when another deadline had come and gone without an issue being completed, when did Millennium become such a chore? When we first started publication three years ago, the magazine was printed on a small press and distributed locally every month: it was never more than

twenty pages and frequently it was less; it contained one story, a comics section, and usually a couple of columns.

When we switched to electronic publication, suddenly the sky was the limit: and the magazine began chewing up content with a voraciousness that was depressing. Three stories, extended columns, more comics, sixty pages or more were not uncommon.

It's crazy. The internet does have a way of taking as much content as will

be shoveled into its maw — but there's no reason why Millennium should contribute to such a wholesale devaluation of writing and art.

So, we're scaling back. We hope to publish just as often, or perhaps slightly more often, but each issue will be much easier to digest with fewer pages, stories and articles. It's our way of saying "Stop the insanity! Slow down! This is supposed to be fun!"



Clicking on the Muse Button will always take you back to the contents page.

lisbon 1929

*It was not a
memorable trip,*

dreary and wearing on the mind and it had been taken before. So as a game he entered the port on the familiar ship with eyes closed, letting the other senses play, breathing the fresh air deep in the lungs and listening to gulls strafing the shore above the lapping water. The sound of wheels mired in mud slopped rhythmically to the horse-

drawn pulse of hooves muffled by the sodden shoreline.

But in the self imposed darkness of closed eyes it was odour, at least pungent but more than that... the offal, the excrement, the rotting fish mixed with salt water that washed over him. The air moved to the swaying of the ship and to the blowing of the wind but also to the movement of passengers and crew as they hurried about their busi-

ness. Occasionally they brushed against him carelessly and hurried on leaving behind a sense or a smell or a feeling of who they were.

But then over all the musk a sudden wafted sweet unmistakable perfume, the sense of shadowy movement. It must be her he thought. His eyes snapped open. Blinded first by sunlight over the harbour but then by the form of a man. Damn him. How dare he

fiction • by richard nostbakken

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posses that smell.

His back was turned. His white linen suit was wrinkled but of good quality. His old Panama hat covered a flash of grey on the temples and cascading shoulder length hair. At first his gaze seemed locked on Lisbon harbour and the white mansion overlooking the tide washed shore. But as he turned his tired blue eyes toward me there was a volume of grief that flickered there. He held to his prominent nose a pale blue handkerchief, the source of the aroma that momentarily held me spellbound.

There was no cattarh nor a stifled sneeze, the hand kerchief not pro-

phylactic. I watched with fascination as he breathed it in slowly like an elixir with a look of abstract melancholy reverence then folded it in some haste into the linen breast pocket.

Perhaps aware of my gaze, he glanced. The abstraction faded and flickered ice in its place. Steely blue eyed indifference impaled me.

I blushed a bit for my impolite gawking and for the involuntary shiver his glance provoked. But when I realised that he was walking directly toward me, awkwardness was overtaken not by panic but the fact that I had stopped in mid breath to stare and now an audi-

ble gasp escaped as the needed air rushed in.

He extended no hand in greeting. He stood in front of me now, tall, angular perhaps athletic. On close inspection perhaps the looseness under his eyes was a matter of age rather than fatigue but his gaze was disturbing. To avoid I closed my eyes. Again in my darkness the senses sharpened...damp linen, faint aroma of soap, a trace of anisette...and subtle perfume from a pocket... and now breath on my face from a low voice of sandpaper silk.

"You must be from the labyrinth," it said... And as my eyes flickered to respond, it said.. "keep

them closed and listen. You have used your eyes quite enough for now. Playing the blind man's game as well as you is like a signature and we are from the same school, I know it. What a sight we must be. Two men on a ship standing within inches with eyes closed cataloguing the world around us. Do you need proof? Your right hand is deep in your pocket. You are nervous. A slight rattling of a chain against a pocket watch and a coin... maybe two...but large, probably gold, and a piece of cloth... I would say not large enough to be a handkerchief... but enough to muffle the other contents. You are

wearing wool...with a taint of commercial die, hemp, probably a belt and leather shoes and somewhere else, I think a wallet. You wear no perfume, but olive oil is on your skin and a touch of cinnamon not from baking but a woman's perfume. You need to bathe but there is a residue of soap which is familiar and there is paper... a bit musty perhaps a map, but more likely an old letter with ink from burned charcoal. You have eaten quail with red wine sauce. Without meaning to be rude about your breath you likely have a toothache. You smoke inferior Turkish cigarettes and you wheeze a little when you

exhale...enough?"

"Enough," I said and entering the game in earnest probed the available senses. He had a snuff box close to the handkerchief and presumably the faint odour of French tobacco meant a cigarette case, silver. I wondered about a trace of gunpowder.

"Crete... when where you there?"

"After the war" he said. There was a mixture of cognac and rich chocolate. and the intrusion of passport cardboard. "Do you have a rank?"

"Yes."

Pumice from cleaned teeth, and the soap again... how did he stay clean on the voyage and

licorice perhaps anisette... alcohol.. must be anisette..

"A master?"

"A priest," he said and though my eyes were still closed I knew he was smiling if you could call it a smile. I could hear the faint rustle moving fabric from either a friend or executioner and winced.

"I was sure at almost once," he said. "But I knew it was you when you turned pale and stopped breathing. In my pocket is a scarf with a corner missing. Take the fragment from around the coin in your pocket. If it matches the kerchief in my pocket then I have a gift for you and a

message that she is well. If it doesn't match you won't live long. You know the rules of the labyrinth as well as I."

The labyrinth. Stern mistress of the dark school for intrigue. The final test in utter darkness in the bowels of the ancient ruins. No minotaurs. Only adversaries of the senses, imagination and real danger from others desperate. Failure meant forever darkness. We were both there it's certain tho maybe not at the same time. But she was there. We both knew the perfume.

It had been a few years since the great war. The scores still to settle found strange hideaways.

Training in the art of death and survival continued to take a toll for those of us who made it out of the darkness.

She was not matahari, but she could have been. She was beautiful but carved in ice from from Canadian winter not the steaming Mediterranean like so many of us. Statuesque and blonde with eyes so blue that ice paled by them and young though not as young as when he must have known her. She knew cruelty but she wore it within with quiet introspection. She disguised her intelligence with charm and wit but it was her intelligence that got her there and into the

dangerous games we played in the dark.

How we tangled was part of the danger and a deadly mixture but it was the escape that she taught me in a most peculiar way that both saved my life in the Minoan cavern and cast a spell on her.

At last i opened my eyes, calm now that i had absorbed the shock of the perfumed handkerchief. The sort of smile he had given me i returned. I didn't hate him but he was there and he was in the way and powerful. A priest in the labyrinth was a danger to a master both in Crete and on a ship and i was only a master but at that moment I didn't care.

"Take the fragment then, priest," I said. "You know it will fit . It could only be from then and you know who i am. Now tell be both where she is and how she is and whether I will see her again."

"I will talk to God and get back to you," said the priest, touching the fragment to his lips almost absent mindedly and laughed from somewhere deep. "The gift you have already."

I was already a bit unerved, but the tremor I felt beneath me set old senses on edge. He abruptly walked away to join the tourists gawking over the rail in preparation for landing. It is

never what it seems to be when the game is on and I knew of course that he was tracking my every move as I climbed the rope ladder to the deck over the captains wheel-house.

I needed to collect my thoughts a bit. It had been a few years of relative peace and freedom from the sort of fear that accompanies deadly games. The rekindled memories also needed reprieve.

I still felt young and I was and the dark skin from sun and climate and the ancient Mediterranean culture was still smooth. In the unforgiving mirror there were no lines or blemishes. Dark

eyes, large, almost black, set deep and burning... compact features, small nose with a touch of Helas dropping straight from the forehead with finely shaped nostrils. A shaggy mane like the flamenco dancer framed my face. The razored moustache was a bit pre-tentious but then every one likes to look like Valentino. The body was not large but crafted by constant exertion was in my slightly vain appraisal like Houdini and like Houdini it alluded to old mystery from the underworld and a sort of primitive heat. The mirror held the memory of another time when in the frame another figure

glimmered.

She may not have noticed me instantly. Her road from Canada to this place was cloaked in mystery, maybe it was a search for heat and relief from the icy blast of the north but for certain her combination of beauty and intellect cut through barriers that most have to put up with.

In her inexhaustible competitiveness she quickly mastered what others found difficult to the extent that before graduation she was both instructor and student.

The ruins above the old labyrinth had been restored enough to function as an academy of sorts for the instructors.

She was one of many but her specialty was always at least entertaining. She used a rather compulsive curiosity to create increasingly difficult contests which she could never resist entering and usually winning. So she devised and played. She did not, however fraternise.

Some of course thought they loved her and then did their best to make her respond. I did not. I'm not even sure I liked her very much. Perhaps it was my aloofness that attracted her. It is an area of subtlety that is never easily explained but before long there was beyond doubt a secondary energy at work

and the play adopted an unmistakable flavour. She offered nothing, no outward sign of softening at all but she teased in provocative ways and more and more the challenges that had pretext of academy purpose put us in a direct struggle. My ability to connive at her pace and stretch her abilities to confuse put an occasional light in her otherwise icy eyes.

But she remained nonetheless a woman of ice, so blue in quality, so outwardly passionless but also intense, her whole demeanour one of something dramatic but untapped.

It was I who challenged the labyrinth. It was

reserved as the final initiation into the guild and officially not allowed any other time. At first she refused absolutely but soon it was obvious that a new curiosity began to obsess her too... if such ice could be obsessed. We arranged to meet before midnight on a day which she set.

To avoid reprimand she determined to bypass the main entrance to the secret place. Instead she slipped me a key to her private quarters which had a narrow slot carved into the limestone wall into a hallway above the labyrinth. It was wide enough to slip through but only barely. Perhaps it was she who planted

my self image of Houdini.

It was a full moon that night, not that it should be important underground but to one of ancient heritage it sent a chill up the back and raised the hair a bit in the nape of the neck. Perhaps it was my imagination... too much imagination and I smiled half heartedly in the pale light. but out of a puzzled nervousness I stopped and lit a Turkish cigarette and breathed deep before turning the key and entering.

Then an evening of surprises began. Her quarters were an odd combination of clutter and minimal. There was almost

no furniture but the room seemed full from an illusion created by odd creations of assembled fabrics. There was nothing as defined even as a cushion just an undulating sea of monochrome, perhaps silk of a peculiar non colour... not blue not silver perhaps paynes grey broken occasionally by rich earthy tapestry. There was only one concession to accessory. Against the interior wall a small finely carved mahogany table and in front of it a quaint upholstered foot stool of florid red that against the austerity of the rest almost shrieked for attention.

She was sitting on that table, one delicate san-

daled foot shockingly white against the red footstool. She was dressed in black. It was spellbinding.

Blonde hair cascaded over white skin, crystal blue eyes, all wrapped in continuous ribbons of black separated only by a mahogany pedestal from the textured sea.

But more striking was the aroma. Soft and subtle from everywhere but of no apparent origin, that is, not flower or spice and not perfume but from her, set like an exotic frozen gem against the umber limestone it was distinct and stopped my heart. It was the combination of body warmth with a touch of honey and cinna-

mon and a peculiar musk that created a pleasant stirring and unwelcome blush to my dark Mediterranean skin.

She offered me a gaze of no particular emotion save a hint of challenge. I was suddenly aware of my cigarette which now seemed vulgar in this environment. I also knew that a test of the senses was about to begin layered with a new game that her eyes told me she was devising and that so far all the advantages were hers. She gazed at me still and I was struck that the parted lips half smiled and half mocked.

I made two decisions. I finished the cigarette and held deep in my lungs the

Turkish smoke and i put my mouth over hers. I was struck at the unresponsive chill but her lips did not reject and did not seek. There was no protest either when I exhaled the dark smoke deep into her.

But the result was truly exotic. She breathed back into my face raw Turkish bitter wrapped now in her scent and eyes now burning with intensity she transformed into cream skinned sensuous arabesque.

The fabric room wrapped itself around us in primal cloak. When it finally washed us ashore we stepped through the narrow portal into a hallway of both mind and

reality. At the end two low openings led to the labyrinth. We walked silently, not touching. As she stooped to descend she gave me a parting glance and a wide eyed look of almost fear.

As I stepped into my portal I wondered at the faint taste of blood. I wondered also at the fire that now burned deep in me. As I stepped over the threshold into blackness I realised that something fundamental was churning inside me of a peculiar and primitive nature that was at once painful and sweet. but it was without fear that I took my first step into the dark.

But fear was next.

There was no floor and i was falling free in total blackness. A scream of panic froze in my throat and soundlessly I was nowhere at all. I knew in that instant i was falling but in zero light there is no reference point except the rush of damp air.

I had barely the presence of mind to prepare for water as an alternative to being battered on a stone floor and then plunged feet first into what must have been water, hot like a Turkish bath with a trace of sulfur. Now completely disoriented I was submerged like a fetus in a subterranean amniotic womb stifling the impulse to gasp for air.

There is no describing the inky complete crushing blackness. Perhaps it can be imagined but everything falls short of the reality of being alone, underwater, starving for air. But I felt air against my face as I surfaced and I gulped like a starving man and tried to collect myself.

There was no way to judge where I was or where to go but I was treading water in it. Realising i might be there for some time I shed my clothes and made a small bundle which trapped some air and held it under my chest for flotation.

With no sight to guide me I consulted my other senses for clues. There

were echoing drops of water indicating walls and a dull lapping of water that mirrored the rhythm of my movements. I soon got used to the rhythms when it was disrupted I knew I was not alone. The same involuntary chill that accompanied me into her quarters was with me now as I contrived to be impossibly still.

The aromas were not entirely unpleasant. This was not stagnant water. It must be fed by springs or tide. From the warmth I concluded hot springs and yet the tingling of salt did not taste like underground and there was a peculiar silkiness to the water a sediment as fine

as kaolin that lubricated and turned the skin to velvet.

Then a soft puff of delicious air with the honey cinnamon musk with still a trace of raw tobacco buffeted my face. It was deliberate provocation. She was there in front of me, for who knows how long. There was no face to guide and no smile or frown to read but again the breath and a soft voice that said, "Abandon hope you who enter here."

My laughter echoed off the walls like cannon fire and I was again embarrassed at my clumsiness. She was no Dante and this was noHell. "But your blood is still fresh

on my lips by dear," I jested in return, still wondering about the lingering taste "Aand I have come for more before the sun rises."

"Listen," she said softly but with deliberate effect "This isn't the Labyrinth but it is near by. When the tide is out, this room will empty and we can walk there together for the contest."

"In the meantime," she said, "We are here."

Now there was heat with the breath and her lips no longer icy but exquisitely warm were on mine. Perplexingly it was my lips that were cool as she filled my lungs in return with the scented air of this black

cavern womb and it was my turn to be ignited.

Now we floated in darkness without gravity with no orientation, no sense of up or down or beginning or end and rolled like otters in quick-silver silt and steaming water. It was wrenchingly erotic and we writhed continuously without exhaustion until eventually together we touched the bottom.

The tide was out. we listened and smelled for clues and direction. Rather than diminished by the extended eros there was an unmistakable sensation of having been filled with both energy and power. I shook my black mane to

rid the wetness and wondered why without shoes which I had lost, my footsteps on the now dry stones sounded like hooves.

In the distance a low canine growl invited me to follow.

My senses were near the point of overload and every part of me cried out for sight. Compensating for blindness my other senses were protesting overwork. Straining for some focus on the surroundings I simply accepted the sound of hooves echoing as I walked and that the hooves were mine. I accepted also a surreal body awareness.

The unusual weight of

my head made me feel slightly clumsy. A cumbersome burden between my legs was unfamiliar as heavy testicles swayed from a long pendular scrotum. It seemed absurd but nonetheless acknowledgement of the endowment sent a ripple of muscular pleasure from the buttocks, along the spine to the proud mass at the base of my neck between the shoulders. I did not feel unhuman and in no way like a beast but I bucked my considerable weight and shook what I now knew were horns against the dark.

She was only nails clicking on stone. From the echo I knew she was

pacing in a circle. I began to realise that it was her imagination that was giving me form and that I was forming her in my mind also.

She was gaunt and very large with long legs that could stride for hours over deepest snow. She bore a double row of teats under her ribbed belly like the Romulus wolf. It was a curious combination of eternal hunger and the instrument of nourishment. She was pure white except for grey-blue eyes which danced with playful excitement.

Now imagined she appeared into internal light, head slightly cocked, tongue hanging to the side in a sort of

smile and an imagined room opened up to the mind. It was Minoan, with muralled walls with doors in every direction. The floor was mosaic with effigies of past conquest and torches provided light. She bolted and I gave chase on hooved feet.

It was a labtrynth. We tried chambers and retreated and tried again. Sometimes I was ahead sometimes I followed. Sometimes we tired of the puzzle and stopped to play... the skipping beast shaking itís horns to the dancing wolf in a thrust and parry walse She would nip at nose and throat and especially delighted in notching the

swaying privates. At times she rode on my back and leaped over me and my horns cradled her fall.

There was foam and fatigue and laughing animal exertion until finally in a dead heat we burst together into the last chamber.

It was empty save for a large glass panel standing unsupported in the centre of the room. She padded her way to one side of it and I hoofed to the other. We gazed at each other.

Again transformation. She was no more a wolf but now blonde and very naked and serenely beautiful. I smiled and she smiled. I formed my mouth to speak and she

did too but neither of us spoke. The corners of her lis upturned asking “What?” and I answered “what.”

We each put our palms to the glass and I looked deep into her eyes and our faces would have touched had the glass not been there.

I was aware that I was now barefoot not shod and naked in front of her but also that the glass was there for good. It was between us and would remain so. Without warning the tears flowed, first quiet but then with spasms from below and she cried too. We both wiped our eyes and regained necessary composure and drew breath.

and she smiled and I smiled.

“Congratulations,” she said. “You have mastered the Labyrinth.”

“You showed me.” I replied.

“No,” she said. “You revealed it to yourself.”

I wiped my brow and she did too. Then the chill again and the hair on the neck the hackles stood not out of fear but sudden comprehension.

“This is not a window,” I said.

“No.”

“A mirror?”

“Yes.”

“Am I now you?”

“No.” she laughed. “But we are now the same imagination and in a way you made me up

and i made you up... so in a way we are the same. You are meeting your other."

"And the labyrinth?"

"It's a myth," she said. "it doesn't exist... You have been in one room only... the rest is in your mind. I was there too but in imagination. You ran in circles in complete darkness and so did I. We existed in the mind as if we were really there and we raced through the same maze but of the mind only. We are still in the mind now. You see blond and blue as your own reflection I see a black mane and burning dark eyes. It's the same illusion for both of us, our reality too. We are

our other as well as we are ourselves."

"What happened in the water?"

"That was real, it's how we joined; but we can't go back there."

"From it I became a beast."

"And I a bitch," she said half smiling.

And I smiled.

"What about the blood?"

"I meant to tell you... don't be afraid.. it was your own blood you were tasting from my lips... I won't say more than that."

"Was it more than a game?"

"Look," she said. We are now equals and it will never change."

"And we may grieve a little?"

"If you must. I'm done with grief. But give this a chance. You are outside the labyrinth now."

There was flicker of blackness like the chamber blinking. Her voice now behind me said "Time to go."

Momentarily we were on the same side of the mirror together reflected, burnt umber wrapped around a white form and one was her and one was me.

"Hang on," she said as the water rushed in, again hot and velvet and floated us up and vomited us out through the opening by the hallway and back above ground.

Through the narrow opening and into her candle lit quarters we stepped unselfconsciously naked through the dishevelled sea of cloth. She resumed her perch on the mahogany pedestal.

"You left your jacket here... maybe you should put it on." I blushed for the third time as I obliged and now only bottom half naked I pulled a Turkish cigarette from the breast pocket and lit it from a candle. It was when i tried to achieve a more modest pose that I first noticed i had been bleeding and where.

"Who won?" I said.

"Both of us." She resumed her inscrutable marble demeanour, once

more the queen of ice, blonde, blue against an umber wall naked on mahogany creamed foot on red silk.

I left her there. I never went back to the labyrinth now that I knew what it was I didn't need to graduate.

From the roof over the captains cabin I could see the shore fast approaching. He was still there with the other passengers, feigning disinterest. I stared for awhile still steeped in old images.

I closed my eyes and summoned him out of the labyrinth and out of the blackness he entered into my mind and I entered his and we stood opposed there with great massive

heads and horns, pawing the earth.

"I do not concede," I said to this beast, "but I don't protest. She will decide the time and if there is a new game and who will play."

He rocked his horns and his testicles swayed in their scrotum pendulum and his nostrils flared

"Is she well?"

"She is well."

"Peace be with you priest," I said. "When you see her, tell her I remember."

We stood for a moment in the mind, rocking our horns and my nostrils flared too and I swayed like him and I smiled as well for the small scar there from an old wound

that notched the tender spot where she bit me .

In the distance a wolf howled. When i opened my eyes, he was gone.

I didn't look for him..





In the Town where I was born...

1968, ten years old, sitting in a barbershop, looking at a copy of LIFE magazine while I waited, I learned about YEL-LOW SUBMARINE and was immediately caught

up in its vision. A few weeks later, attending a matinee at the Fine Arts Theater in Portland, Maine (in its original location off Congress Street: later and for many years it was to become a notorious porno house) I saw the movie for the first time. It seemed as if I had waited forever for the picture to arrive, and I was not disappointed when it did. In those days movie screens were still huge, just before the

coming of the mall multi-plexes that scaled our dreams down to postage stamp size. I saw the most amazing sights that day: the cadre of Blue Meanies bearing their flamboyant leader onto the field of battle; the flying glove with its multi-colored jet propulsion and its ineffective attempts to squash happier people; a house in London packed to the gills with pop-culture icons — and that was only the beginning. My memories of that first screening of YELLOW SUBMARINE are crystal clear and have never wavered. It was easily the most influential movie of my early years. At that

time I could never have put the reasons into words, but now the words seem obvious: it was because YELLOW SUBMARINE brought everything into focus: music, cartooning, pop art and pop culture, the past and the present, movies and reality. To me, it remains the one and only truly definitive movie of its time.

The plot was razor-thin, a wire hanger for art and wistful thinking to drape themselves over; but if anything the plot is more relevant now than it was thirty years ago, with its hordes of blue-suited (corporate) clowns bonking into submission any one or anything daring to

show an ounce of individuality or happiness. The art, too, seems more audacious in our dry and drab nineties, where the movies have grown darker and grayer and the only colors that have been allowed to stand out are either flesh-hued, blood-hued, or blue. YELLOW SUBMARINE would not be possible today: the corporate Blue Meanies would never allow it, and although the artists could probably still make it, it would likely come out far more cynical and jaded, perhaps with the Meanies winning out in the end, as they always do. Like THE AVENGERS (who appear briefly as statues in The Beatles's fabulous

Pop Culture warehouse), YELLOW SUBMARINE was revolutionary in its time, and has been made more revolutionary by the passage of time.

Three or four years after my first viewing of the film, visiting grandparents in my home town of Edina, Minnesota, I bought the soundtrack album of YELLOW SUBMARINE at Southdale, what was then the most enormous complex of shopping centers known to mankind. Since then Southdale has been eclipsed by many ungodly malls, especially including the Mall of America, just a few miles away; but with its parking lots marked by cartoon

animals, its labyrinthine depths, and with the memories I had of childhood visits to the place (once I saw life-size dinosaurs set up in piazza), Southdale still retains its enormity in my subconscious. The YELLOW SUBMARINE soundtrack was one of the first records I ever bought, and my first Beatles record ever. It featured a song that wasn't in the movie...

Not until three decades after the film's release — not until a month or so ago — did I learn that the song in question — HEY BULLDOG — was indeed featured in the original London release of the film, but had been

cut from the American version: and that the film had been “restored” for a new release, including the original HEY BULLDOG sequence.

If you slugged all the way through the words above you can imagine that I was about bouncing off the walls when I discovered this. Not only was YELLOW SUBMARINE back in release, but it was back with new footage. And the restoration is marvelous: the movie looks as good as new and sounds better, HEY BULLDOG is a delight — but it creates an alternate version of YELLOW SUBMARINE and raises questions about the artists

original intentions.

I'm privileged to own a copy of the original release video, so I can compare the two versions scene by scene. In the 1968 released version of the film, the Beatles arrive in Pepperland and free Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band from a blue globe. As the blue smoke chugs out of the globe, John sings BABY YOU'RE A RICH MAN, which continues over a montage of battle scenes as the Meanies are driven back: including a memorable shot of the Head Blue Meanie's aghast reaction when his machine gun begins to fire flowers instead of bullets (very much a

1960's image). As the song fades out, Ringo goes off to rescue Jeremy the Boob.

The new version is entirely different, a few minutes longer, and is missing many of the battle shots used in the earlier version. The first notes of BABY YOU'RE A RICH MAN play; then the song fades out. The Lonely Hearts Club Band returns to life, steps down off the stand and there's a fun scene as the Beatles meet and interact with their counterparts. Then Meanies charge in with their three-headed bulldog, and the entirety of HEY BULLDOG plays out. Then the Blue Armies begin to retreat,

and Ringo goes off to rescue the Boob. No battle montage, no machine gun sprouting flowers.

Good as the HEY BULLDOG sequence is, and delightful as it is to see a lost chunk of footage, new to us, the animation is not up to the standards of the rest of the movie, and the original release version has more dramatic punch and integrity. It's hard to fault the restoration team for the decision that they made: what *were* the filmmaker's original intentions, and how do we second-guess them? What *is* the original release version, London or America? But we *can* fault them for dooming

the earlier version to video death, and we wish that both versions had been included in this release: certainly it would have made a good "extra" for the video and DVD.

It's a question of degree that we'll run into more and more as movies are "restored" — or in the case of THE WIZARD OF OZ and YELLOW SUBMARINE actually changed for modern audiences — what constitutes restoration and where does it become alteration? Either way, with this movie, we'll take what we can get.

Me and My Mummy

Given the necessity of big businesses to protect their creative properties, and given that The Mummy is of all movie monsters the only one that does not have any literary or folkloric (if that's a word) tradition behind it — the only classic movie monster to have been created out of whole cloth as it were by movie makers, in this case Universal — it was only a matter of time before a remake was mounted to protect the copyright from falling into public domain. 1932, after all, is

rapidly approaching the cutoff point. While Universal can't make vampires, werewolves or man-made monsters proprietary, it can do so with The Mummy.

So from a corporate standpoint, a new version of The Mummy didn't have to be *good*; it just had to be *made*. How surprising, then, to find Universal actually spending money on it, and to have the film turn out this well.

If you must airlift The Mummy into 1990's vernacular — and make no mistake, though set in the 1920's this Mummy is distinctly in the '90s vernacular — this is just about as good an airlift as

one could hope to expect, a very calculated blend of one part horror movie, two parts Indiana Jones, and one part Ray Harrihausen extravaganza. Even the violence is calculated to an eyeblink as PG-13 violence: the horror sequences being admirably restrained (a good example is the Death of the Flunky, which is more effective and horrifying for being a good deal less gruesomely explicit than other films of this type have led us to expect), whereas the action sequences are sometimes quite nasty, even down to a hanging scene.

It would have been



CG here, CG there, CGI are everywhere...

Rachel Weisz convincing stares down Nothing At All.

impossible to duplicate the successes of the 1932 original, especially its marvelously subtle opening sequence, and screenwriter/director Steven Sommers has wisely opted not to try, choosing instead to retain what he can from the original and

expand from there. Later mummy movies reduced the monster to a shambling, near-mindless thing who could do nothing worse than strangle you if for some bizarre reason you could not manage to outrun him; but in the 1932 original,

Boris Karloff's mummy was capable of regenerating himself and killing long-distance by means of powerful Egyptian magical spells. Sommers has returned to that concept, adding a dash of Clive Barker's HELLRAISER (the regeneration itself now a plot point, with Imhotep harvesting organs from the living to replace his decayed ones), while satisfying expectations by including Imhotep's servants as the mindless shambling garden-variety mummy. CGI has allowed Sommers to up the decibel level of Imhotep's powers to a point of godlike invinci-

bility, making him one of the most powerful villains ever to grace the movies.

Well-directed and making good use of its wide screen, this version of *The Mummy* is marred only by its strictly by-the-numbers calculation (and what the hell, calculation has always been a Hollywood commodity, even in the 1930s), by an over-use and abuse of CGI special effects (to the point where in the final reel you've got about a gazillion CGI mummies stumbling around the tomb, creating an effect that's sadly comical rather than horrific) and by Arnold Vosloo, the jamook who

plays Imhotep and who has nothing of Boris Karloff's talent or depth to put it mildly. Big-eyed and bald-headed, Vosloo is nothing more than a sort of clothes horse on which the director can hang even more CGI.

Brendan Fraser is at least as hard-working as Harrison Ford and arguably more gifted; Rachel Wiesz provides everything that she is expected to provide, and the supporting cast all play admirably. The end result is better than it needed to be, with genuinely chilling moments and genuinely thrilling ones, and certainly better than Hammer's take on the series in the 50's... we

might even go out on a limb and call it the second best of that very exclusive club of Mummy movies: but first we want to re-watch *THE MUMMY'S HAND* (first of the Kharis series, with Tom Tyler as Old Moldy), the exciting, low-budget retake of the character that launched the series and made the Mummy viable for the '40s, as this one does for the '90s.

The Phantom with a Thousand Menaces

As the corporate boot

continues to grind Americans and American culture into a fine gray powder, even those who could reasonably be expected to strike a blow against the Suited Hordes have begun to let us down. We were cheered when we learned that George Lucas was financing *THE PHANTOM MENACE* out of his own pocket precisely to avoid creative interference from small-brained studio big-wigs — but the cheer turned to dismay when the movie finally premiered and proved to us all that Lucas has no more sense left than the average Armani coat.

When Lucas made STAR WARS twenty-two years ago, his ambition was no more lofty than to make a modern-day SF serial: Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers for the '70s, with a budget that allowed for reasonably realistic effects (not that the impressionistic effects of the earlier films have lost one ounce of their charm to these eyes). Since then, Lucas has spent far too much time suckling at the teat of Joseph Campbell, and now, with THE PHANTOM MENACE (as with his earlier flop, WILLOW) Lucas is avowedly trying to create "a modern myth" — his own words, folks: he ain't

makin' movies, he's makin' MYTHS — and if that isn't enough to make you roll your eyes and gag then you are made of much sterner stuff than we.

Lucas seems more interested in fostering his own twisted sort of neo-Hubbard DIANETICS quasi-religion — a religion founded on ether and cumulous clouds — than he does in telling an arresting story.

Lucas's lofty ideals kicked in just in time to turn RETURN OF THE JEDI into a ponderous and disappointing piece

of poo-poo, and now with THE PHANTOM MENACE Lucas seems more interested in fostering his own twisted sort of neo-Hubbard DIANETICS quasi-religion — a reli-

SAND FACES, his archetypal characters have been still-born without arms, legs — or heart.

Worse still, Lucas is so disinterested in constructing a plot that will hold our attention, that he has resorted to essentially remaking the first film. Here again is naive boy recruited by mystical knights to discover the hidden powers within (only this time the boy is pre-teen). Here again is the peaceful planet (replete with grotesquely made-up princess) being menaced by the Big Honking Space Station — which space station must be blown up somehow by heroic fighter pilots. This, literally, is

the *third time* in *four movies* that we have seen the damn Death Star go up in smoke. How many times is the empire going to have their toys blown up before they hit on the fact that it ain't working?

The sadness of this is that twenty-two years ago Lucas was one of a handful of Hollywood Golden Boys who had talent and clout. Two decades later, he still has the clout — but where is the talent? Perhaps it was never really there. To make AMERICAN GRAFFITI Lucas borrowed from the Pop Culture of his youth. To make STAR WARS he borrowed from Buck Rogers. Lucas the filmmaker is still borrowing

his daydreams: only the source that he's borrowing from has changed: and for all Joseph Campbell's virtues, only an idiot would ever think

Lucas the filmmaker is still borrowing his daydreams: only the source that he's borrowing from has changed: and for all Joseph Campbell's virtues, only an idiot would ever think that his works could be adapted to film.

that his works could be adapted to film.

The result is a grotesque parody of Campbell's theories: a

parody that reaches its nadir in THE MYTHOLOGY OF STAR WARS, an hour-long interview, with supporting film clips, hosted by Bill

Moyers, in which a smug and faux-highminded Lucas explains to us at some length that Darth Vader symbolizes evil

and The Force symbolizes loss, to the thunderous accompaniment of millions of filmgoers smacking their foreheads.

Moyers, normally a responsible journalist who has produced some of the best reactionary news and opinion programs around, must have felt the loss after Campbell's death several years ago. His series with Campbell, THE POWER OF MYTH, is largely responsible for the surge in Campbell's popularity and the re-casting of Campbell's turgid and scholarly books into best-selling cash cows. The phenomenal success of the series produced its own best-selling book,

and the undoubtedly cash-conscious Moyers (who, on PBS, isn't cash conscious?) has been trying to repeat the formula — without success — ever since.

Near the end of Campbell's life, the mythology professor became a frequent guest at Lucas's Skywalker Ranch, and the two men developed a mutual admiration society (with Campbell proclaiming that Lucas had done "a very great thing" in RETURN OF THE JEDI). Only natural then, that Moyers should try to climb on the Star Wars bandwagon rather than dig up Campbell's corpse and try to pry the secrets

of life and death from its frozen lips.

To resort to Campbell-type expostulation, the death that we mourn is a threefold one: first, the death of popular entertainment where adventure doesn't have to co-opt philosophy in a misguided attempt to "legitimize" itself; second, the death of journalistic integrity as Moyers desperately kowtows to a bearded idiot on national television for no better reason than to promote a movie better off unmade; and third, the death of philosophy as it gropes frantically to become just another mass-market commodity.

Joseph Campbell had a

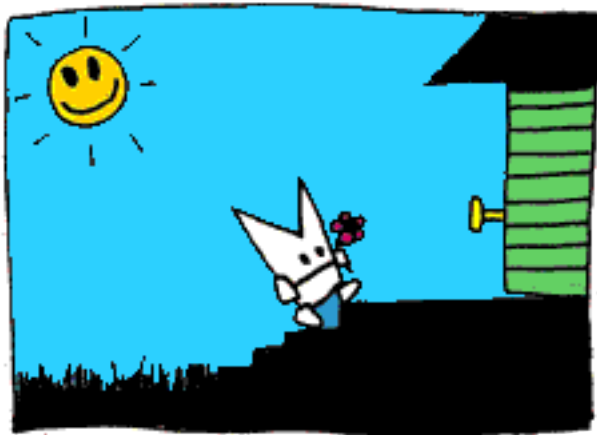
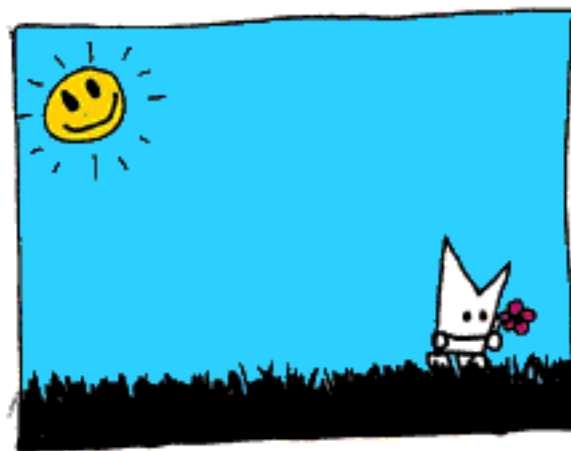
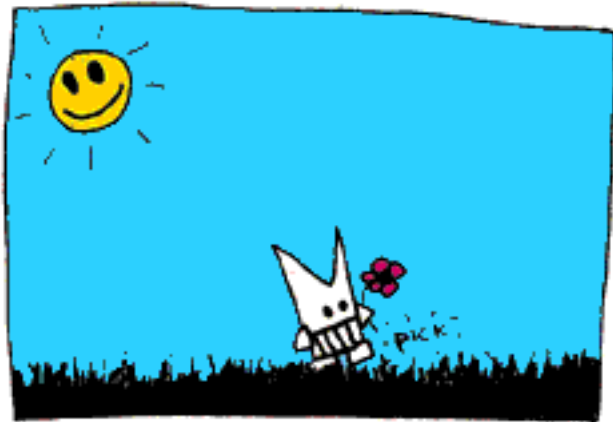
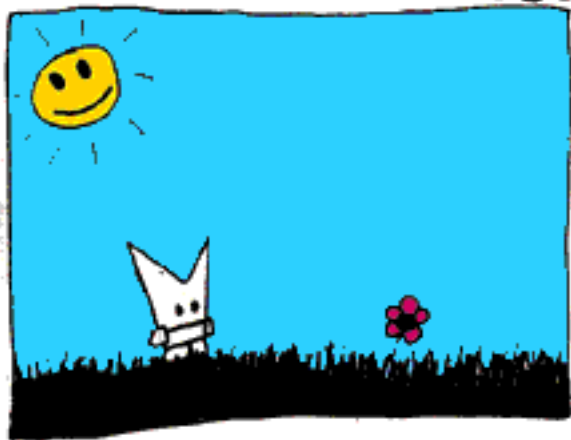
point. George Lucas had talent. Bill Moyers had integrity. Together, they are not merely strange bedfellows: they negate the very qualities that drew us to them in the first place.

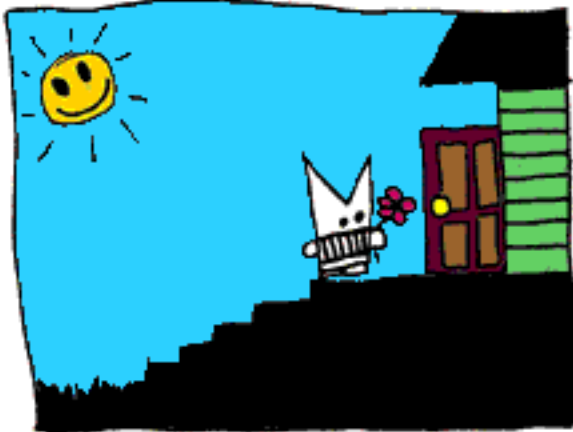
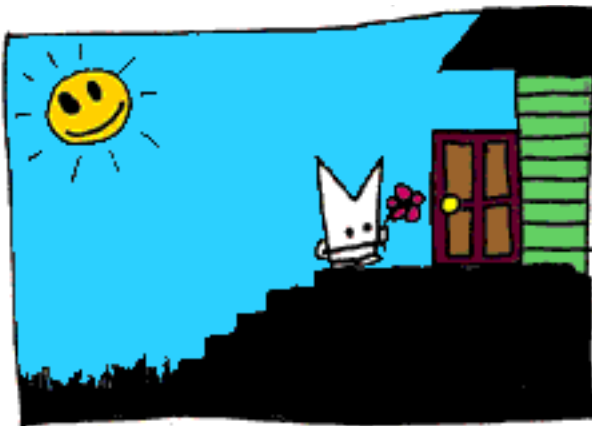
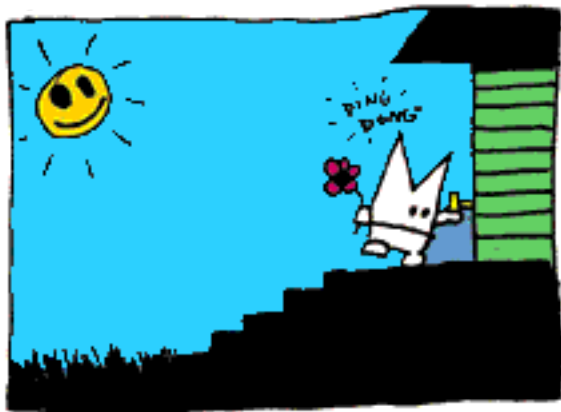




A JOURNAL FOR TOMMORROWLAND

Love in the afternoon ... part one





“the rescue” and “love in the afternoon” ©1999 by jeff badger



A JOURNAL FOR TOMMORROWLAND



The Queen of Riseholme

Utterly plotless, yet filled with plots and plotting, the Lucia books by E.F. Benson are the perfect thing for a lazy afternoon. My first exposure to these stories came in the form of the BBC television adaptations star-

ring the breathtakingly marvelous duo of Geraldine McEwan (*Mulberry*) and Prunella Scales (Sybil Fawlt in *Fawlty Towers*); and my reaction to that series turns out to be identical to my reaction to the books: Light of touch, dry to the point of brittleness, the Lucia saga at first makes you wonder how you could possibly persevere in this non-story about small-town intrigues... and then, quite suddenly

and without any sort of warning you are hooked: and Lucia's movements through Riseholme, London and Tilling become terribly interesting to the point of addiction. Like many of the characters in the books themselves, you become a Luciophile, anxious to discover exactly what move she will next make in her perpetual battles of social one-upmanship.

Lucia — Mrs. Philip Lucas — is one of those

social mavens who know little, yet profess to know much, about all things cultural and good: bereft of any artistic ability nonetheless the creative spirit burns within her, in this case turned in the direction of advancing herself as the social hub around which all the bright things revolve. She is, more or less, a benign monster: as such she becomes more fascinating with every detail, and her handling of every social setback (there are many) ends up winning our admiration.

Benson writes with a gossipy, contagious enthusiasm for detail and character that makes you feel as though the whole

account has been whispered to you *sotto voce* at tea. The conspiratorial tone of the books is in part the key to their success: but the message that comes through is that even a supposedly quiet life can be full of excitement and intrigue, and that the people who provide us with this sort of entertainment are serving a valued social function: by acting as a kind of social seasoning, they bring flavor to what would otherwise be a tasteless dish.

Is Life Futile?

Philip K. Dicks's *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* is the sort of utterly realistic novel that only a visionary SF author could have written. It asks all the big questions about life and death, hope and despair, and answers them in the only way that they can be answered: through oblique references and a shrug. It also has the best opening paragraph of any American novel in the

past three decades (or longer): and if the rest of the book doesn't quite measure up it's only because nothing could.

Set in San Francisco in the early '80s, the novel details a woman's coming to terms with the untimely deaths (two by suicide, one almost by suicide if deliberate absent-mindedness can be counted as such) of her three favorite people: her husband, her father-in-law (the Timothy Archer of the book's title, a radical priest famous in the press) and his lover (once-active in the woman's movement, who put all that aside to become Archer's secretary and confidante).

Anguish over the son's death leads directly to the deaths of the others: and there is some concern that the narrator's own anguish will lead her to a similar fate without the right guidance to intervene. Because the questions are so big we never doubt the reality of the characters: but the setting is already dated and it's likely that in a few years time many of Dicks's references will be obscure to most readers. Still, this is an important novel from a writer who was under-rated in his time and remains so to this day. It doesn't, it couldn't, come out and tell you that life is not futile after all... but it

implies as much; and as long as we can keep asking hopeful questions about the future, we can continue to live.



A Note:

We have forgotten which anthology brought this story to our attention (and we are far too lazy to go look it up) but this note made at the time of the reading just resurfaced; we offer it to you more or less unedited:

“The Story of a Shadow,” by Rebacca Harding Davis

A poor story, marked by amateurish style and structure, raised by a single original insight about the nature of ghosts: that we are not so much haunted by the past, by what we might have done, as by the ghost of futures never happened: by what we might have been.

the **COMICS** *pages*

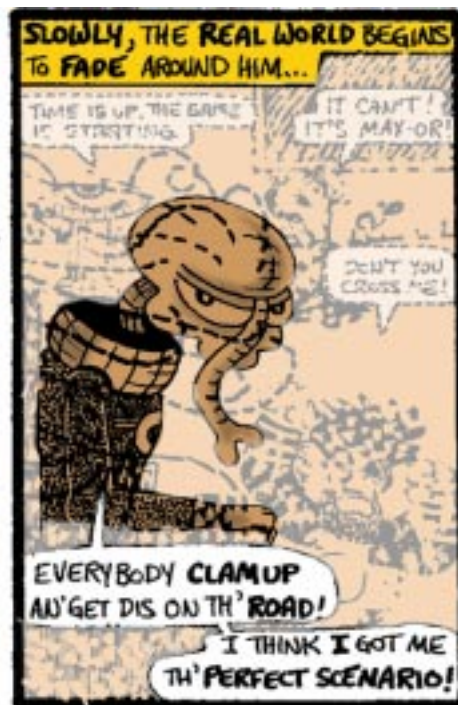


featuring QUIRK, Space Reject

The story thus far: While stopping over on RYSK, the mysterious Gaming Planet, Quirk is trapped into playing the notorious Big Game -- with the lives of his pals Carpy, Smith and Sludge hanging in the balance! His challenger turns out to be none other than the Killer Clown MAX-OR, who harbors a deadly and misguided grudge against our heroes!

A JOURNAL FOR TOMMORROWLAND





SOON, THE ROOM IS GONE, AND QUIRK AND MAX OR SINK DEEP INTO THE NETHERWORLD. AGAIN, QUESTIONS FILL QUIRK'S MIND-- BUT MAX IS THE FIRST TO SPEAK.



LAND SO IT BEGINS-- QUIRK KNOWS THAT THE QUESTIONS MUST BE SAVED FOR LATER...IF THERE IS A LATER.

"IT WUZ ONE O' THOSE HUMID NIGHTS THAT CLING TER YER ARMPITS AN' CURL YER HAIRS. I'D JUST FINISHED A CASE - THOUGH NOT TO ANYBODY'S SATISFACTION, AN' I WUZ HEADIN' HOME THROUGH A GRUNDGITE NEIGHBORHOOD WHEN I SPOTTED HIM...

CHAPTER TWO: SAYONARA, MY HONEYBUNCH

★ HIS QUIRK HAMMER

"HE WUZNT TOO BIG, JUST TH' SIZE
OF A MACK TRUCK... BUT IT WUZ
HIS ATTITUDE THAT CAUGHT MY EYE...

"HE WUZ JUST
STANDIN' THERE, STAREIN'
AT DIS GRUNDGE BAR AN'
MUMBLIN'?"

...thelwa

**with apologies to
A. Chandler*

FINALLY, HE CROSSED TO THE ENTRY-
WAY, THERE TO ASSIST ONE O' THE
PATRONS IN A ROUGH EXIT!



"I REGRETTED IT ALMOST
IMMEDIATELY!"



BY TH' TIME I GOT THERE, TH' BIG GUY'D ALREADY TAKEN OUT TH' DOORMAN, AN' WUZ WORKIN' ON TH' BOUNCER. I KNEW THEN THAT I'D GOTTEN IN TOO DEEP. WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW WUZ HOW MUCH DEEPER IT WUZ GOIN' TA GET!



HE APPEARED TA WANT A SPECTATOR. DAT WUZ ME. BUT WHAT ELSE COULD I DO? I WUZ CERTAIN DAT IF I TOOK STEPS T' STOP 'IM DAT I'D WIND UP LIKE TH' GRUNDGITES WHO STOOD IN 'IS WAY: IN A SEMI-CONSCIOUS PILE!





...TO BE CONTINUED...

read QUIRK every Sunday -- it's the Quirk Sunday Comics Serial at
<http://www.ctel.net/~thornsjo/>



It's dead, Jim...

Here's the sort of sweeping statement that everyone is likely to disagree with: Popular Culture peaked between 1966 and 1968, then began a long slow decline (with little flashes here and there) until 1980, when it plummeted like a stone, until now at the end of the century we basically have no popular culture to speak of.

Relax, I do not mean

that there are no artists, no musicians, no writers, no producers turning out quality work. Quite the contrary. My point is simply that the culture has become so fragmented that it's impossible anymore for a large group of people to be on the same page. At the end of the century there is so much competition for the consumer's attention, not just three TV stations but *hundreds*; where once there were four radio sta-

tions in any given town, each playing a clearly defined sort of music, now there are fifty, each playing eclectic blends. Where once you had to go to a movie theater to see a movie (and you had maybe two or three or four choices) now we have video and literally *thousands* of choices.

The operative word of popular culture is Culture, meaning the connection of people, and how can people connect

culturally any more? How can anyone be on the same wavelength when popular culture becomes Personal Culture — that is, a culture that can be created on the individual level. We can point to the Beatles and 60's Marvel and say, truthfully, that they were the voice of their generation. What is the voice of the 90s? There is none, because with millions and millions of voices all talking at once, nothing of any substance or authority can be said — or, if it is said, it can't be made out above the noise. We have no popular culture anymore — what we have is a tower of Babble.

My friends call it the Balkanization of popular culture; but no matter what you call it, as the Millennium approaches we are facing a failure of systems far more important and dramatic than any kind of computer malfunction. We are facing the death of culture as a binding, unifying, civilizing force. We are truly entering the age of chaos.

But then, I speak as someone just adding one more voice to all the damn noise...

Just because you can doesn't mean you should...

Crappiest Web Design Award for 1999 goes to

the Whitney Museum, whose on-line exhibition of The American Century 1900-1950 is likely to be inaccessible to 75% of the folks who try to visit their site.

If ever there was an on-line museum exhibit that tempted a visit this one is it: but the PC-centric designers who built it have used frames and plug-ins and windows that can't be re-sized and java and just about every other web-trick-du-jour, tossing enough gimmicks at the screen as to almost insure incompatibility with some level of your existing system. A visitor entering the site must navigate through four separate browser win-

dows opening onscreen, with the fourth literally taking over your computer: designed by a fancy New York web-a-lifer who has failed to take into account that most folks don't have monitors with screens big enough to accommodate a no-scrolling-allowed window of this size.

So I never got *in* to this exhibit. So much for the net as a revolutionary way to bring culture to everyone.



Duck Soup Productions

home of the QUIRK Sunday Comics serial

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SOUP

Soup

Stuff

Style

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Where Popular Culture reaches Critical Mass

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